

# White Center Heights Park: Ultimate (& sustainable) Makeover

Jeff Hou, PhD and Kayla Lowber

Presentation at King County Green Building Summit | March 2007

LA 474 Project Design Studio | Winter 2007

Department of Landscape Architecture

University of Washington



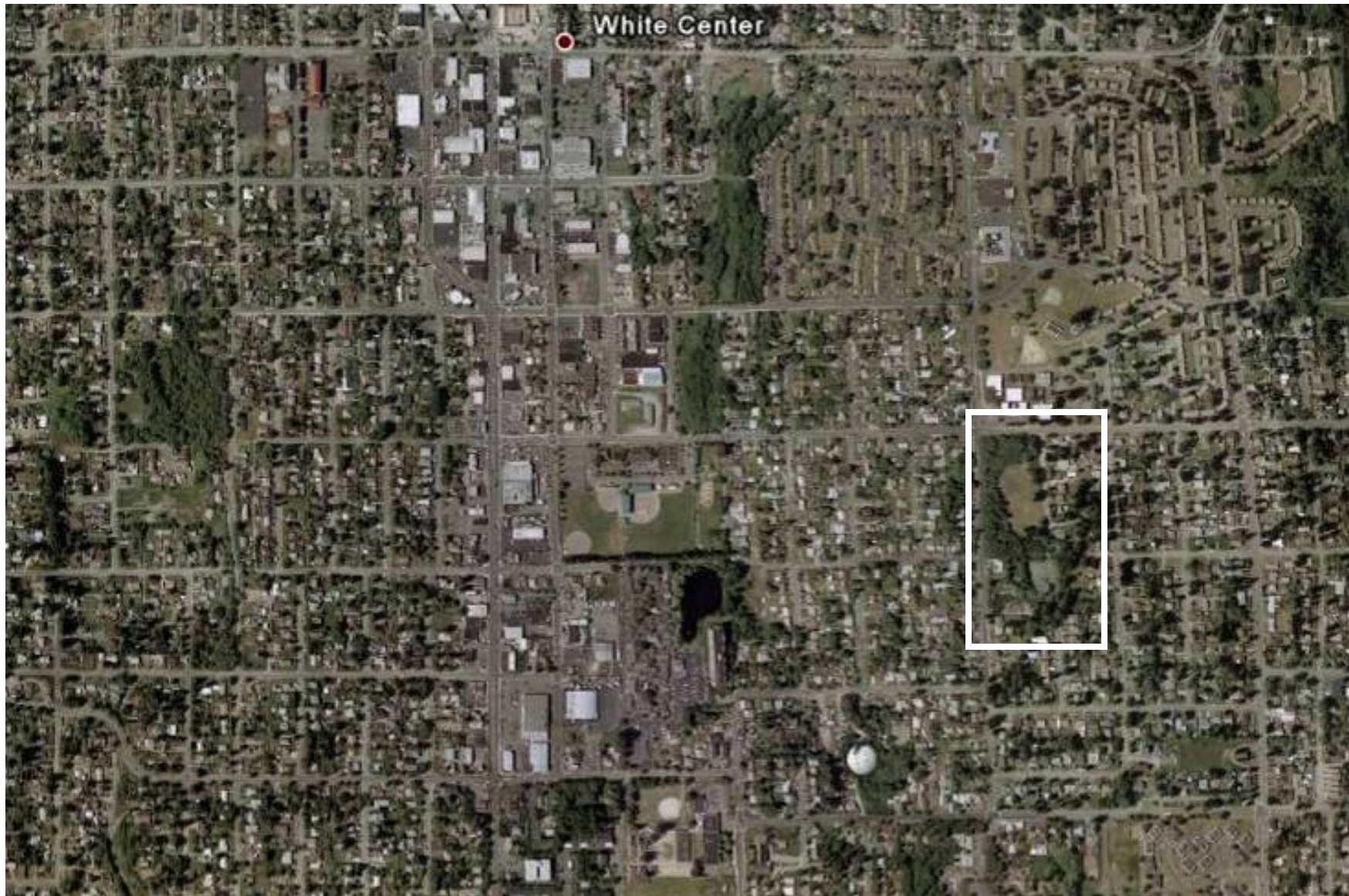
**1. Context**

**2. Environmental Goals & Opportunities**

**3. Community & Public Process**

**4. Park Design**



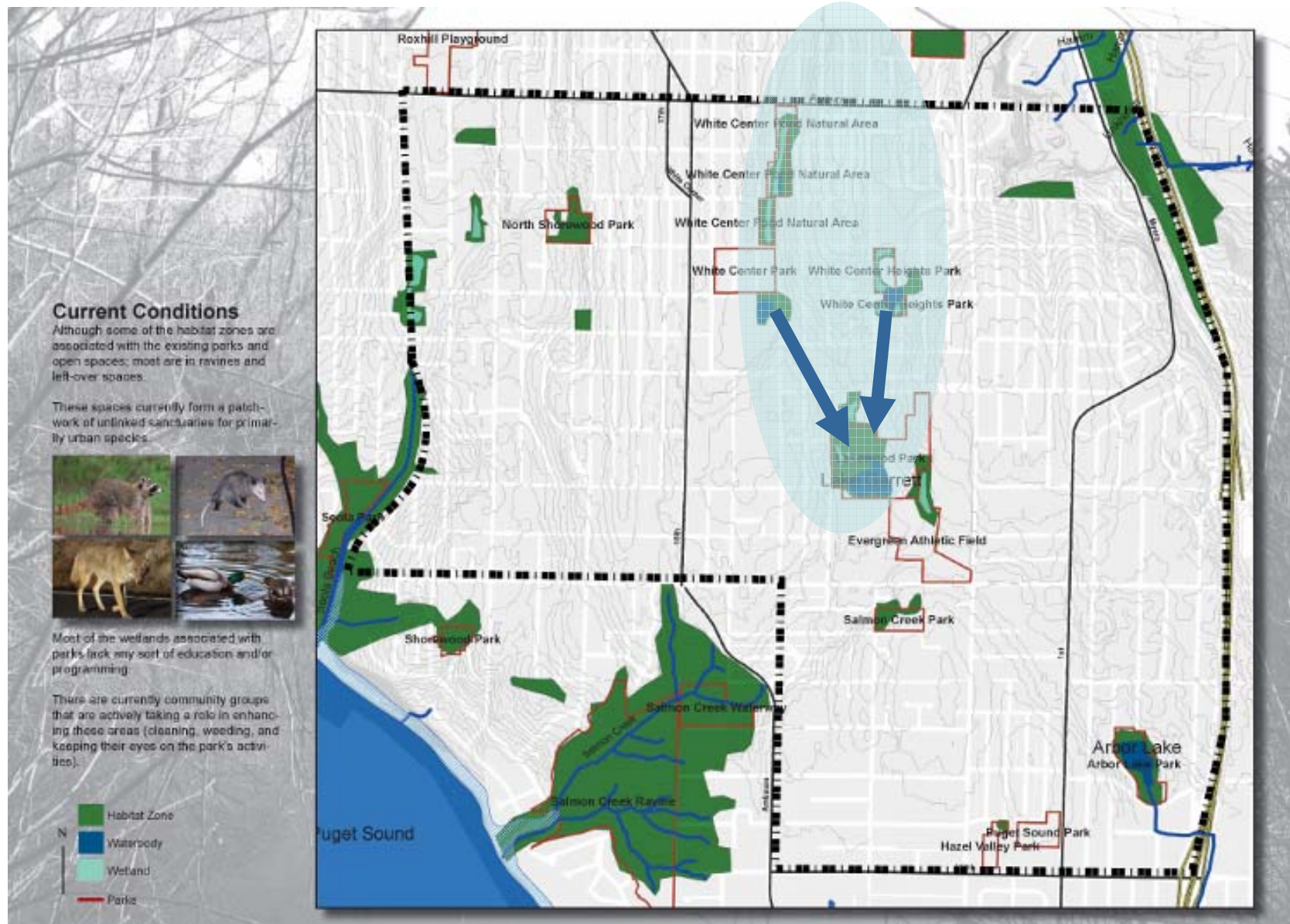


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**habitat**







#### TREES

<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	- Bigleaf Maple
<i>Alnus rubra</i>	- Red Alder
<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	- Pacific Madrone
<i>Cornus nuttallii</i>	- Pacific Dogwood
<i>Cornus monosperma</i>	- Common Hawthorne
<i>Malus sp.</i>	- Apple Species
<i>Pinus contorta</i>	- Shore Pine
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	- Black Pine
<i>Populus trichocarpa</i>	- Black Cottonwood
<i>Prunus emarginata</i>	- Bitter Cherry
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	- Douglas Fir
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	- Pin Oak
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	- Red Oak
<i>Salix sp.</i>	- Willow Species
<i>Thuja plicata</i>	- Western Red Cedar

Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green

#### SHRUBS

<i>Berberis nervosa</i>	- Longleaf Mahonia
<i>Cyperus sp.</i>	- Sedge Species
<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>	- Salal
<i>Hedera helix</i>	- English Ivy
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	- English Holly
<i>Laburnum x watereri</i>	- Goldenchain Tree
<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	- Indian Plum
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>	- Japanese Knotweed
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	- Cherry Laurel
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	- Blacken Fern
<i>Rubus discolor</i>	- Himalayan Blackberry

Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
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Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green
Green	Green	Green	Green

#### INVASIVE SPECIES



English Holly



Himalayan Blackberry



Japanese Knotweed



Black Cottonwood



English Ivy



Goldenchain Tree



SW 10th St Looking SE  
Park adjacent to elementary school  
no access through dense vegetation  
Access requirement needed



8th Ave SW Looking N  
Street level sidewalk  
Major visual access to park through veg  
4' grade change from street to trail  
Invasive Kachetweed dominant plant



Secondary Park Trail from 8th Ave  
Double lined with gravel path  
Difficult to find the garage  
Only other access besides 7th Ave



8th Ave SW Looking S  
Visual access to south intensive wetland  
High level of access to pond  
Major visual access to water  
Adjacent bus stop



SW 10th St Looking SE  
View of dense southern vegetation  
No park observation language  
Difficult to locate park w/o previous knowledge or a map



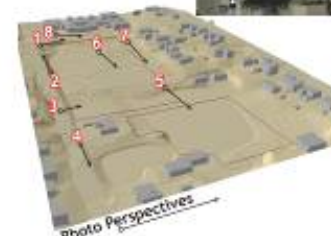
7th Ave SW Looking S  
Primary park access  
Dead end street  
Minimal parking  
Poor signage  
Lots of under used street space  
No lighting



Park Field Looking S  
Open circulation. Bounded only by vegetation  
Very limited programming  
Open field accessed primarily from street w/ additional boundary trail



Wash Wetland Looking S  
Accessing limited wetland access  
Major visual access  
Many opportunities for restoration, access, and education



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context +  
existing vegetation





## White Center Heights Park



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North Shorewood Park

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## White Center Neighborhood Pond



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## Lakewood Park



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# Open Space Analysis for White Center

## White Center Parks

Parks	Acreage	Parking Lot	Access From Public Road	Picnic Area	BBQ Area	Baseball Field	Volleyball Court	Open Play Field	Community Center	Restrooms	Soccer Field	Play Equipment Area	Tennis Court	Multi-Purpose Court	Other
<b>Arbor Lake Park</b> S 124th St and 4th Ave S Seattle WA 98168	8.54	–	✓					✓ (1)							Bridge
<b>Evergreen Athletic Field</b> 606 SW 116th St Seattle WA 98168	15.77	–	✓	✓ (1)		✓ (3)					✓ (1)				Local Trail
<b>Hazel Valley Park</b> 2nd Ave SW and 126th St Seattle WA 98146	2.86	–	✓					✓ (1)				✓ (1)			
<b>Lakewood Park</b> SW 108th St and 10th Ave SW Seattle WA 98146	29.49	✓ (2)	✓	✓ (3)	✓ (3)			✓ (3)				✓ (2)	✓ (2)		Disc Golf Course
<b>North Shorewood Park</b> SW 102nd St and 24th Ave SW Seattle WA 98146	6.26	–	✓	✓ (3)								✓ (1)		✓ (1)	Dog Park
<b>Puget Sound Park</b> 1st Ave S and 126th St SW Seattle WA 98146	5	✓	✓	✓ (3)				✓ (1)				✓ (1)		✓ (1)	Running Track
<b>Salmon Creek Park</b> SW 118th and 8th Ave SW Burien WA 98146	4.58	–	✓	✓ (2)				✓ (2)							
<b>White Center Heights Park</b> SW 102nd St and 7th Ave SW Seattle WA 98146	5.57	–	✓	✓ (3)											
<b>White Center Park</b> 1321 SW 102nd St Seattle WA 98146	11.55	✓	✓	✓ (3)	✓ (1)	✓ (3)	✓ (1)	✓ (3)	✓ (1)	✓ (1)		✓ (1)	✓ (4)	✓ (1)	Handball Court
<b>White Center Pond Natural Area</b> 102nd Street SW and 12th Avenue SW Burien WA 98146	9.43	–	✓												

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parks





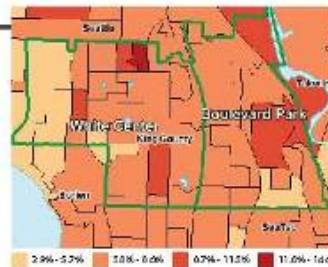
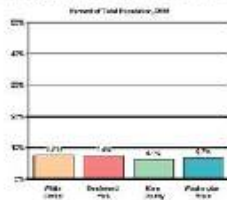
# Environmental Goals & Opportunities:

- + Enhancing habitats
- + Environmental learning
- + Demonstration of green building techniques
- + Stewardship

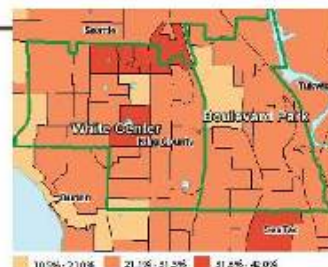
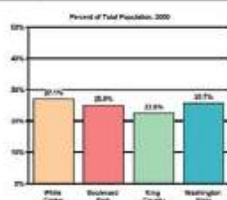


# Community & Public Process:

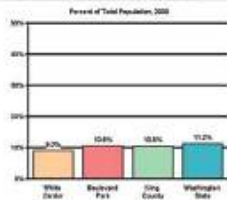
Population Under 5 Years



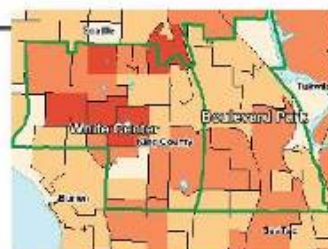
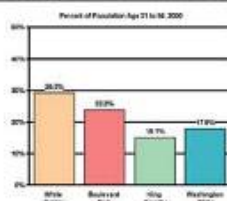
Population Under 18 Years



Population 65 Years and Older



Population With a Disability



## Racial Makeup

White	- 54.96%
African American	- 6.41%
Native America	- 2.01%
Asian	- 21.09%
Pacific Islander	- 2.60%
Hispanic/Latino	- 11.98%
Other Races	- 6.89%

Total Population	- 20,975
Total Households	- 7,542
Median Age	- 33
Avg. Household	- 2.78
Avg. Family	- 3.29
Male to Female	- Equal Ratio

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# Community & Public Process: Timeline



Neighborhood Planning Process  
(WCCDA)



White Center Heights Park (King County &  
WCCDA)

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# Community & Public Process: Community Meetings



Participation



Creative Ideas



Passionate neighbors



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# Community & Public Process: White Center Heights Elementary



## Finished Design



## Interactive



## Collaborative



# Fun



# Community & Public Process: SW Boys & Girls Club



Excitement



Complex Ideas



Creative guidance

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*Safety:*

**Lighting**

Visual access  
Work with police  
CPTED  
Anti-vandalism  
Anti-graffiti  
Neighborhood  
monitors  
Anti-sleeping

*Furnishings:*

Play structure  
Trash cans  
Benches  
Fencing  
Dog-poo bags  
Kids' fountain  
Tables  
Public art  
Lighting  
Picnic shelter  
Gazebo  
Park entrance  
Barbecue  
Signage

*Recreation:*

**Soccer**

Basketball

**Volleyball**

Badminton

**Open field**

Chess

**Trail**

Tennis  
Tether ball  
Frisbee

*Events:*

**Barbecues**

Picnics

Concerts

Craft fairs

Kids carnivals

Educational

School related

Concessions

**Birthday-parties**

**Neighbor-hood gathering**

*Education:*

Interpretative sign

**Trail**

Shelter

**Outdoor classrooms**

Boardwalk

Demonstration area

**Wildlife habitat**

Historical display

Science-based

**Water quality**

**Cultural displays**

*Landscape:*

Tree maintenance

**Grass field**

**Wetlands**

Buffer restoration

Tree planting

Vegetation removal

Accent garden

**Rain garden**

**Native plants**

Community gardens

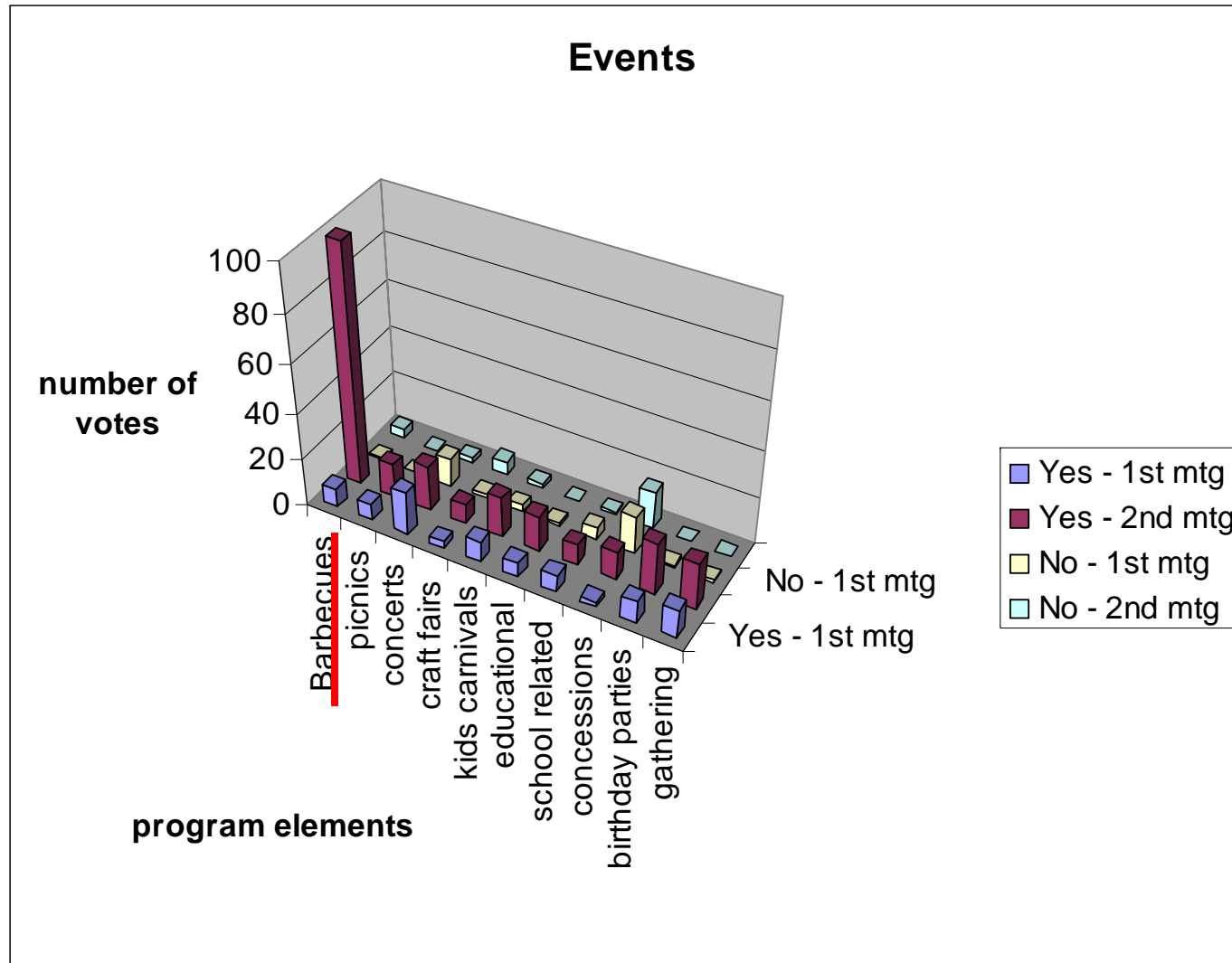
Plant salvage

Composting

International arboretum



# Program Elements



**Education**

**Events**

**Furnishings**

**Landscape**

**Recreation**

**Safety**

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# Design Principles



**ACCESSIBILITY** provide universal access for all ages and social groups to enjoy the park.

**DIVERSITY** reflect the cultural and social diversity within the White Center community with respect to different ethnic cultures, age groups, and users.

**DISCOVERY** provide opportunities for outdoor environmental learning and discovery

**ECOLOGY** enhance wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and other ecological functions in the urban environment

**GATHERING** encourage social gathering and community building in the White Center neighborhood

**IDENTITY** establish a unique identity and sense of place through design elements, use of materials, and program features.



# Design Principles



**INNOVATION** consider and explore innovative ways to achieve the stated goals and objectives.

**INTEGRATION** integrated into the fabric of the White Center community through improved access, spatial character

**PARTICIPATION** the design, construction, and continued evolution of the park shall involve local residents and stakeholders.

**SAFETY** consider ways to prevent and deter crimes through enhanced visibility and other measures

**SUSTAINABILITY** address long-term sustainability of the urban environment through material selection, reduced runoffs, and energy-saving design

**VERSATILITY/FLEXIBILITY** in order to serve a wide variety of uses and adapt to future changes and temporary events





C.

Wetland integrity &  
public safety

F.

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F.

Gathering spaces &  
community gardens



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# Final Review



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## Site Design Scorecard – Please rate each project by circling the letters that represent high, medium, or low.

Student Teams	Program, Identity & Diversity: Does the design address the diverse cultures and needs in the community?	Public Safety: Does the design address safety issues for park users and neighbors? For example, is the visibility into the park enhanced?	Habitat & Sustainability: Does the design improve habitats for wildlife and enhance urban sustainability?	Phasing Strategy: Does the phasing strategy meet the short-term and long-term needs of the community?	Community Involvement: Does the design provide opportunities for continued community involvement?	Technical feasibility: Is the design technically feasible considering the constraints such as wetland classification, budget, and time?	Ranking: please rank the top 3 projects by number (1 as the top choice).
team <b>A</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	
team <b>B</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	
team <b>C</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	
team <b>D</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	
team <b>E</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	
team <b>F</b>	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	H M L	

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# Community Open House



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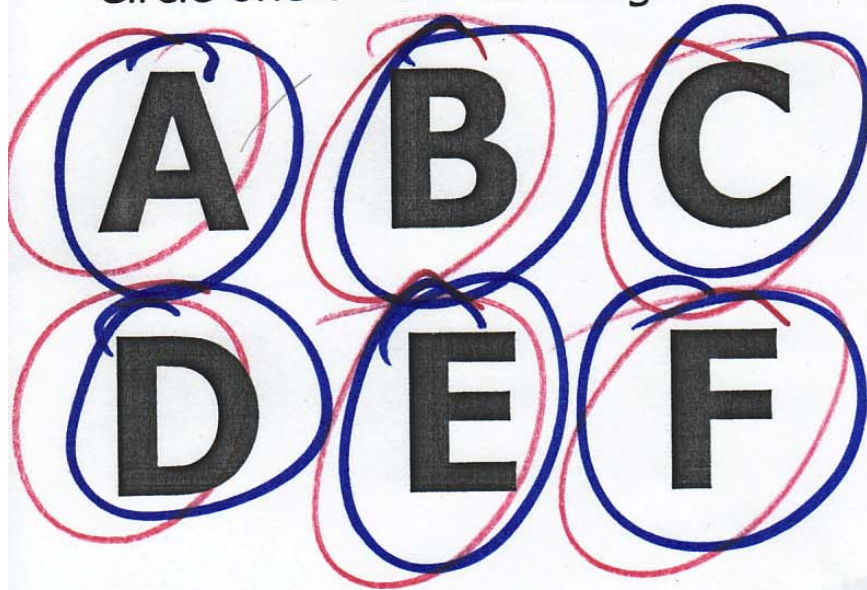




**Vote for your favorite design**

**... and tell us what you like about it**

Circle one of the following:



I CAN FEEL  
THE LOVE!

# Park Design:

## Convergence: Connecting Community and Ecology



gather



celebrate



enjoy



restore



protect

The convergence of community and the ecology is the driving force behind the design. Although it is difficult to meld nature into the urban fabric it is essential. This park succeeds in creating a place that community members feel safe, comfortable, and where they enjoy meeting their neighbors. Children have multiple opportunities to play, from climbing on boulders to swinging and field sports. These examples serve to activate the park, but they are not the principle focus. Allowing the community to take ownership of the park through education and involvement ensure it's success. Neighborhood organized invasive plant removal days along with general clean-up days produce the type of space that is celebrated for many years to come. Therefore, it is through design that the convergence of the community of White Center begins to take care of the sensitivities of this park. These wetlands are beautiful places that are the home to a host of plant and animal species that depend on healthy environments. By connecting the community to the wetlands in the park, more can be done to create a healthy and sustainable White Center.



## Program Elements

1. Community Gathering Space
2. Celebrated Entrance
3. Green Roof Shelter
4. Mosaic Water Wall
5. Community Garden
6. Picnic Areas with Barbecue grills
7. Open Playfield
8. Walking Loop
9. Berm Amphitheatre
10. Interpretive Learning Trail
11. Art Installations
12. Woodland Playground
13. Native Vegetation Garden
14. Wetland Enhancement
15. Boardwalks
16. Wetland Viewing Platform

## Park Identity

This design produces a new identity for White Center Heights Park. It changes from an overgrown, invasive lawn space with no amenities, to a rich and vibrant sanctuary for the community and nature. Several features within the design create special moments for all visitors. These include beautiful meadows, water walls, wetland boardwalks, an intimate community shelter and a landscape rich with textures and diversity.

## Public Safety

Park safety is greatly reduced through opening up the lawn into the space. Public safety is very important to the success of this project. There are numerous entrances and exits to the park, which allow for multiple options of when arriving and leaving. Vegetation choices and timing of existing trees increase the visibility in and out of the park. With the eyes from the streets and close neighbors, vandalism is greatly reduced and protestors flee.

## Sustainability

All elements within this design include built structures and natural areas are centered around sustainability. For paths, crushed stones are used instead of concrete or asphalt. The community gathering space is surfaced with eco-pavers a recycled material. The woodland playground uses boulders as one of the main play features. Re-using boulders from wetland areas and the continued enhancement of the wetlands improves their health year by year. Some buildings and features function perfectly while serving as an impetus for educating the community and involving them in sustainable behavior.

## Multicultural Uses & Expressions

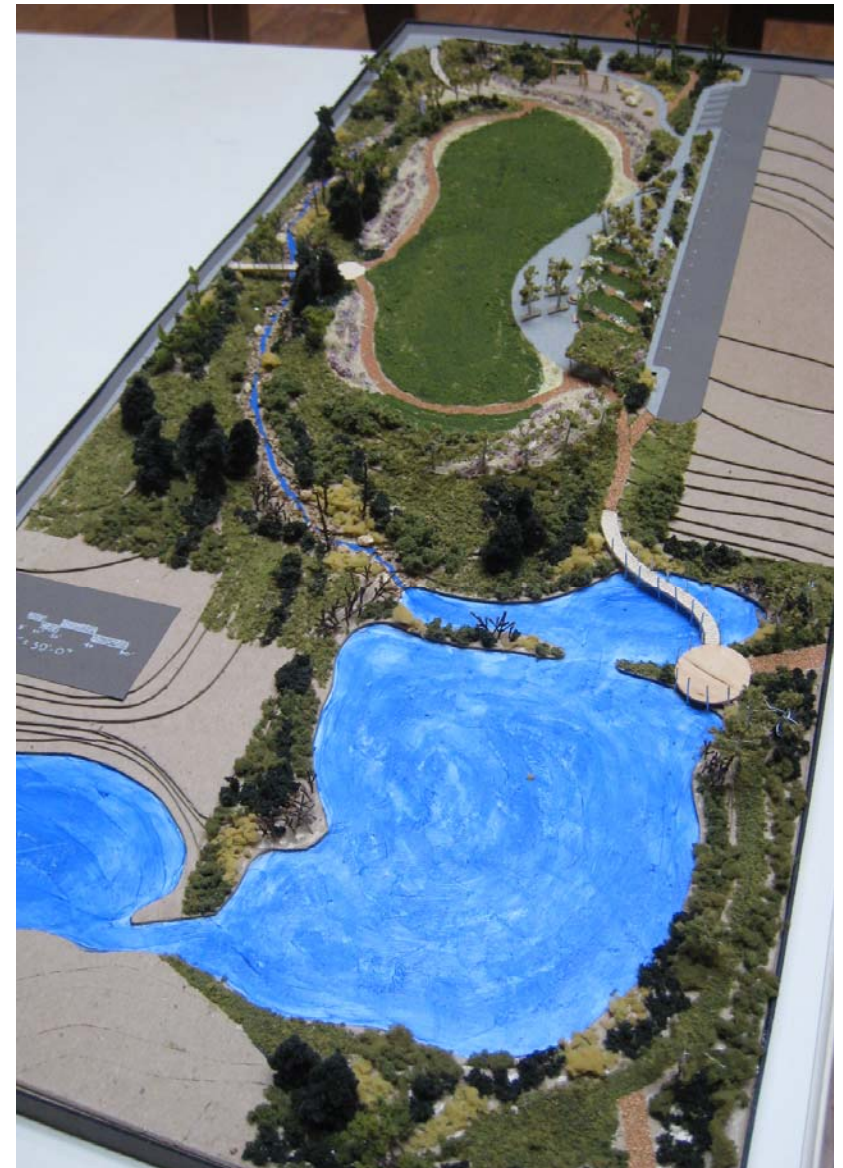
White Center is comprised of dozens of different ethnic communities. These groups are what make this area so unique and special. White Center Heights Park is a place where cultures meet, as neighbors come together.

## Environmental Learning

With White Center Heights Elementary School across the street, the park allows for unique educational experiences. Teachers are provided curriculum to instruct students on the importance of wetlands and the vital functions they serve for urban living. Interpretive signage relays the same message to everyday park users.

## Community Involvement

The majority of construction on this site will be completed by volunteers from Starbucks Corp., and the White Center community. Ongoing phases involve a lot of community participation for construction and open space. Having community involvement will help the park remain a landmark for the neighborhood.



## [park master plan]

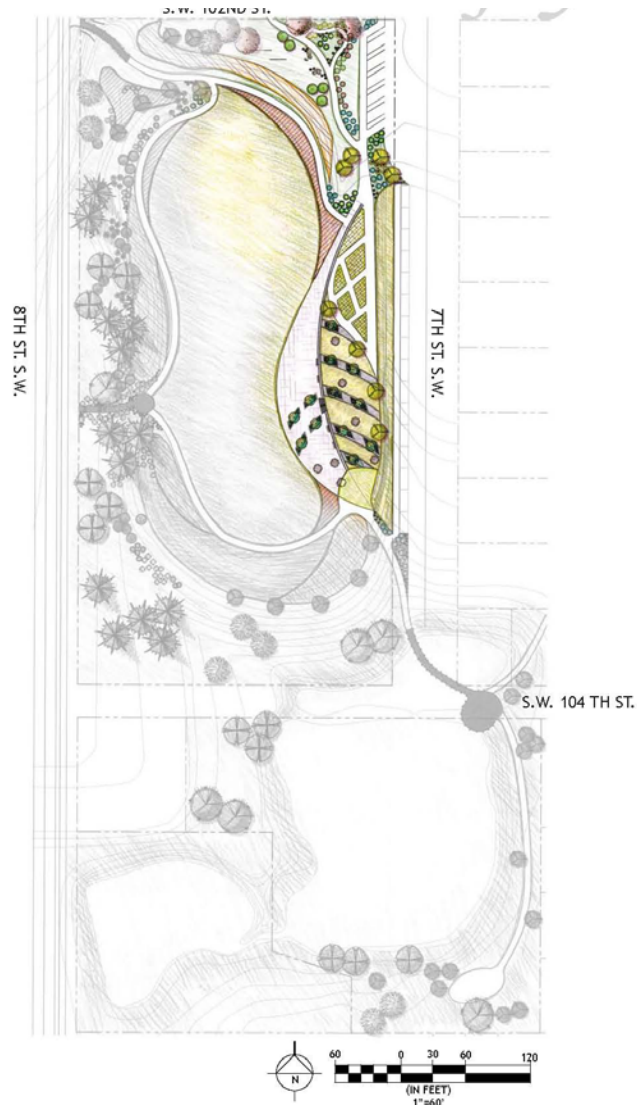
Convergence: Connecting Community and Ecology

White Center Heights Park

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**phase 1** (June 2007)



**phase 2** (2008-2009)



**phase 3** (2010-2015)

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## Program Elements

### 1. Multi-Level Gathering Space

The concept behind the gathering space is based on levels in various forms, from elevation, to activities. The space is designed so that more passive activities such as the gardening and picnicking are on the upper portion of the space so as to not disturb neighboring residents, and the lower portion, which is separated by a low wall is paved and dedicated to more active programming, and functions as a transition into the open field.

### 2. Green Roof Shelter

The intrigue to the shelter for the gathering space lies in the pitched green roof. The Rabali Library inspired structure will foster sustainability and enhance the identity of the park.

### 3. Glass Mosaic Water Wall

The glass mosaic water wall is the highlight of the gathering space. It serves as the separation device between the two levels of the space. The wall is broken up into eight foot sections of glass mosaic tiles and a sheet flow of water, which is lit to enhance the visual effect of the glass tiles and water. Between these sections are seating areas and potted plantings.

### 4. Community Garden

The community garden is one of the design elements which will greatly contribute to the park. The garden is broken up into plots, which are separated by walk accessible paths. The community can use this garden to grow a variety of plants, from flowers to vegetables, which they can take home and use.

### 5. Woodland Playground

The woodland playground is located in the north east corner of the site. It consists of swings, climbing structures, a mud wall, and a native vegetation garden with interpretive signage to educate the community about native plants.

### 6. Playfield

One of the desires of the community was to retain the open playfield, which currently exists on the site. The playfield was not only retained, but greatly improved and is an integral part of the design. The playfield allows for an open expanse throughout the park which is an important feature for maintaining public safety. The flexibility of the playfield allows for a wide variety of activities to occur in the space and will enhance the vibrancy and experience of the park. To the south of the playfield is a large amphitheatre which provides a comfortable seating area to relax and watch the various events on the playfield.



Golden Larch Red Oak Dogwood



Cornus Sibirica

Red Oak Dogwood

N.W. 5th St.

N.W. 5th St.

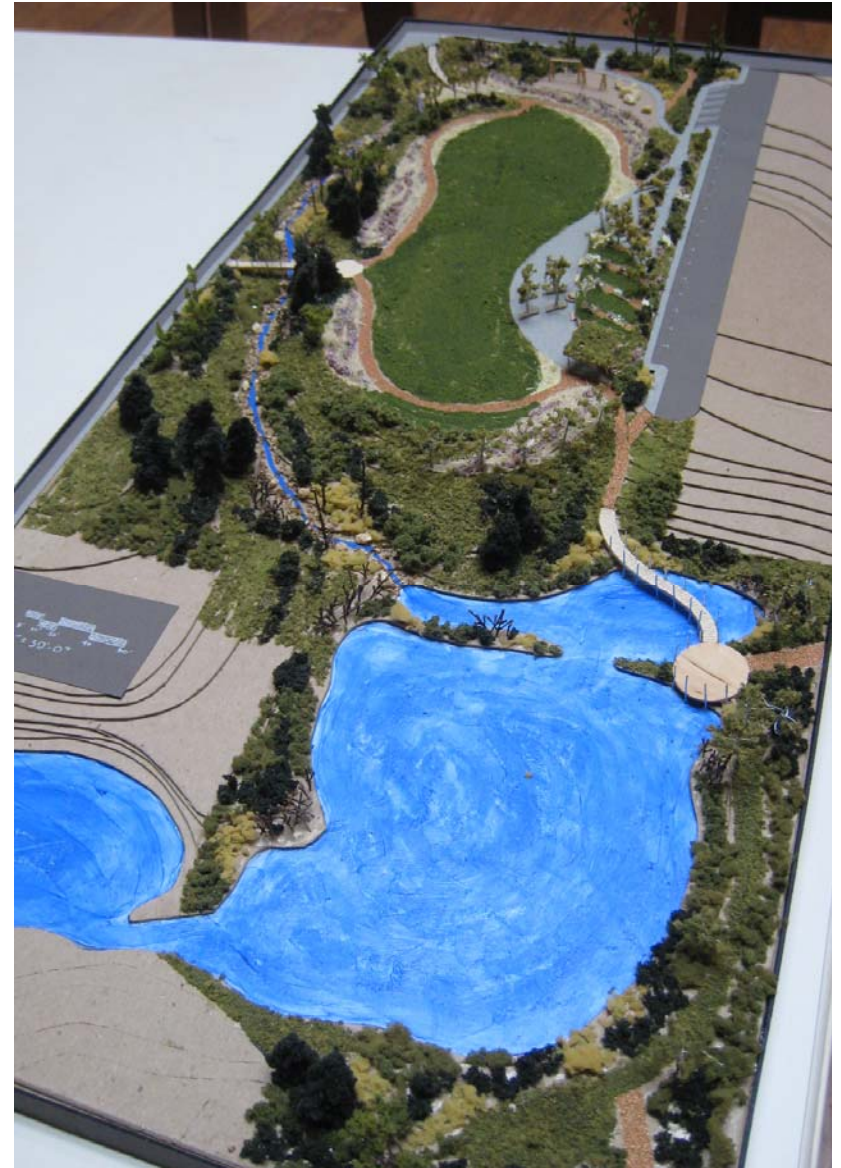
S.W. 104th St.



Section A: 1" = 10'-0"



Section B: 1" = 10'-0"



## [schematic design]

### Convergence: Connecting Community and Ecology

## White Center Heights Park

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# Thanks!

To Starbucks, WCCDA, King County,  
WCH Elementary, SW Boys & Girls Club

